Thank you, Representative Kaptur, for having me at this briefing, and to my colleagues Tefere, Manuel, and Ben for sharing your insights on this very important matter.

Of the Northern Triangle countries from which the unaccompanied minors have arrived and continue to arrive, Witness for Peace works in Honduras, so I'll be focusing on the Honduran case.

One of the phenomena that Honduras has experienced since the implementation of CAFTA-DR has been an uptick in foreign direct investment (or FDI). Just between 2007—a year after the agreement went into force in Honduras and in the U.S.—and 2008, the USTR reported that FDI in Honduras from the U.S. alone had increased by $60 million.
(http://www.ustr.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/reports/2010/NTE/2010_NTE_Honduras_final.pdf)

Indeed, the administration of previous Honduran president Porfirio Lobo held a conference called "Honduras Is Open For Business" in May 2011, touting Honduras as "the most attractive investment destination in Latin America." The title of the conference seemed a thinly veiled suggestion that, the governments coming out of the 2009 coup would prioritize FDI, compared to the pre-coup government having supposedly hindered it. At this conference, there were addresses from proponents of free trade throughout the hemisphere. These included former Colombian president Álvaro Uribe, whose government signed an FTA with the U.S. amid high levels of human rights abuses, many of which emanated from rural land conflicts similar to what we see in Honduras—as I'll discuss presently. The presence of such speakers should have been a red flag for anyone concerned about courting investors as political repression raged on in Honduras against social movements and critics of the coup.

With this increased FDI in Honduras has come a profusion of agro-industrial and extractive megaprojects. In the Lower Aguán Valley, small-scale farming communities have suffered violent attacks linked to large landowners, and in some instances have been displaced from their lands to create space for large-scale African palm monoculture agriculture, largely destined to become bio-fuels for so-called "green energy" markets or to be used in carbon trading. Over 120 people have been killed in this conflict since 2008.

In particular, the operations of the Dinant Corporation, a palm oil company headed by Miguel Facussé, have been credibly accused of driving the conflict in the Lower Aguán. Dinant has been alleged by local and international NGOs of using tactics ranging from falsified legal arguments to killings and forced evictions by armed guards, in order to take control of large swathes of community-owned property. Dinant had received a $30 million loan from the World Bank, until pressure from advocates led the Bank's Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman to conclude that the Bank's private lending arm had not abided by its own social and environmental policies in making the loan [to Dinant]. [I should mention that Rep. Kaptur signed onto a 2012 Dear Colleague Letter to then-Secretary of State Clinton, expressing great concern over the human rights situation in the Lower Aguán Valley, so we appreciate her involvement in such matters.]

(http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/jan/13/world-bank-ethics-scrutiny-honduras-loan-investigation)

The opening up to FDI, post-CAFTA and post-coup, has also seen an increase in hydroelectric dam projects. There have been conflicts where these projects have impinged on Indigenous territory and resources, as has been the case in the Blanco River area. There, the Lenca Indigenous community and a national Honduran Indigenous organization, known by its Spanish acronym COPINH, have peacefully protested a dam project being constructed on Lenca ancestral territory. The peaceful protesters, though, have been met with violence both from local supporters of the dam and from U.S.-funded Honduran state security forces. Last July, Tomás García, a father of seven who was the auxiliary mayor of his town in the Blanco River area, and a member of COPINH, was shot and killed by the Honduran army, who also seriously wounded his 17-year-old son Allan.

Additionally, following the 2009 coup, there has been a push to develop Special Economic Development and Employment Zones, commonly known as "charter cities" in Honduras, which are essentially cities run by corporations. These charter cities are supposed to spur development, but would give foreign investors, Honduran economic elites, and the U.S. economists that champion and formulate these cities, more control over Honduran territory in the context of already vast inequality and the kind of land conflicts I've just mentioned.

And furthermore, concurrent with violence stemming from various manifestations of free trade policy and its resulting market-led economic projects, has been a collapse in Honduras' institutions. [As [Tefere] mentioned,] Honduras is the murder capital of the world, where reporters, lawyers, judges, and historically-marginalized populations (as we can see from the examples of Indigenous and small-scale farmers I just mentioned) are targeted for killing at very high rates, and such crimes are rarely investigated, much less punished. Members of the Honduran security forces have also been variously found to have collaborated with drug trafficking groups.

CONCLUSION:
While it can be difficult to delineate precisely how much which factors are contributing, relative to one another, to the current unaccompanied minor crisis, it seems clear to Witness for Peace and a number of other organizations, that the scenarios I've just discussed contribute to a situation of marked citizen insecurity in Honduras.

With all of the economically derived pressures on the dispossessed people of the Honduran countryside, along with the lack of opportunity and violence that are rampant in urban areas--often giving people, including children, few options other than collaborating with criminal groups or migrating--it seems that for Honduras, the question should not have been "if" but "when" and "how sustained," with regard to the influx of unaccompanied minors from the crises one can see in Honduras (and the distinct, but in some ways similar, crises we see in Guatemala and El Salvador).

SO, WHAT CAN WE DO?

First, we can treat this as the regional humanitarian crisis that it is, and not as a U.S. immigration enforcement problem, protecting and treating these children humanely, not subjecting them to our extremely flawed immigration detention system.

We should also stop thinking that we can deport ourselves out of this crisis. Tragically, several children sent back to Honduras have already been murdered. And we must recognize that it was deporting people back to Central America that helped create the gangs that are a significant factor to the insecurity that is fueling this crisis.

We can withhold assistance from Honduras' state security forces, which have proven that they cannot meet basic human rights standards. Instead, we can seriously examine the lessons from community policing--including in countries as close by as Nicaragua—and other community-based violence prevention and development programs, to support efforts along those lines.

And certainly, we can revisit and re-write CAFTA to incorporate meaningful human rights, labor rights, and environmental protections. And we can reject the TPP.

It won't be easy, but if we really want to see resolution instead of prolongation or duplication of this crisis, we have to comprehensively change our economic and security policies that are intensifying problems coming out of the poverty and inequality in Central America.

Thank you so much for your time and attention.